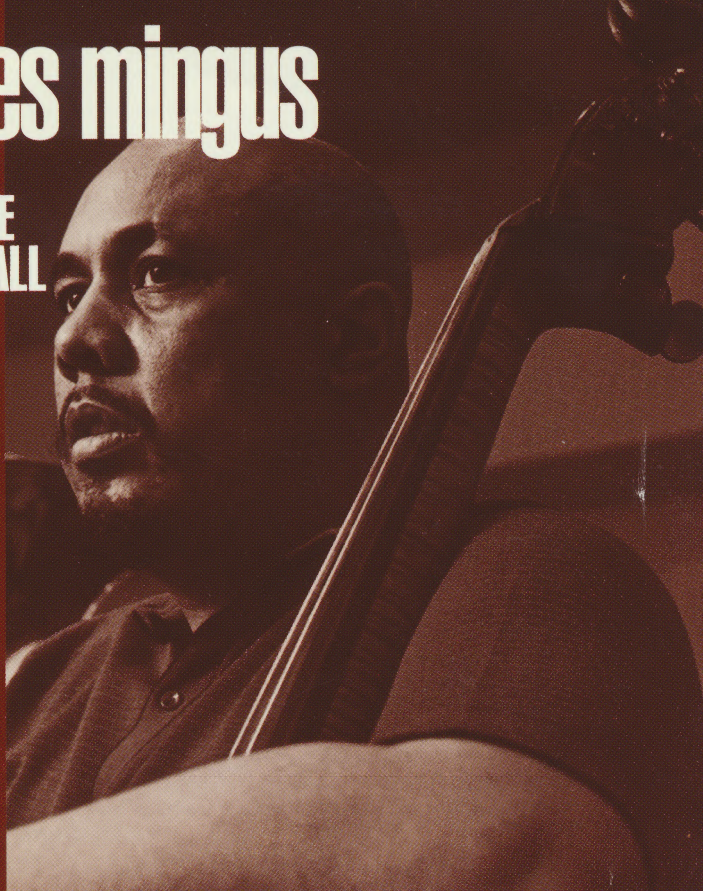


# charles mingus

## THE COMPLETE TOWN HALL CONCERT

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CDP 7243 8 28353 2 5 CHARLES MINGUS THE COMPLETE TOWN HALL CONCERT BLUE NOTE ®

# Charles Mingus

## THE COMPLETE TOWN HALL CONCERT



1. FREEDOM - Part One (3:45) +
2. FREEDOM - Part Two (aka CLARK IN THE DARK) (3:11) \*
3. OSMOTIN' (2:47) \*\*
4. EPITAPH - Part One (7:00)
5. PEGGY'S BLUE SKYLIGHT (5:17) \*\*
6. EPITAPH - Part Two (5:08) \*
7. MY SEARCH (8:06)
8. PORTRAIT (4:31) \*\*
9. DUKE'S CHOICE (aka DON'T COME BACK) (5:09) \*
10. PLEASE DON'T COME BACK FROM THE MOON (7:22) \*\*
11. IN A MELLOTONE (aka FINALE) (8:18) \*
12. EPITAPH - Part One (alternate take) (7:22) \*\*

all compositions by Charles Mingus, except "In A Mellotone" by Duke Ellington.

featuring:

Clark Terry and Richard Williams - trumpets  
Eric Dolphy, Charles McPherson and Charlie Mariano - alto saxophones  
Zoot Sims - tenor saxophone  
Britt Woodman - trombone  
Jaki Byard and Toshiko Akiyoshi - pianos  
and others

Complete personnel listing inside.

This CD features the complete historic 1962 Town Hall Concert by Charles Mingus, originally recorded for United Artists Records. It has been digitally remixed from the original three-track tapes.

+ original two-track mix was used.

\* previously issued in edited form. The aka titles are the ones used on the original United Artists LP release.

\*\* previously unissued

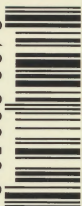
Original recording produced by Alan Douglas and George Wein  
Reissue produced by Brian Priestley  
Recorded on October 12, 1962 for United Artists Records  
Digitally remixed from the original three-track tapes by Malcolm Addey

Total time: 68:32

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CDP 7243 8 28353 2 5 CHARLES MINGUS THE COMPLETE TOWN HALL CONCERT BLUE NOTE ®

# Charles Mingus

## THE COMPLETE TOWN HALL CONCERT

Snooky Young, Ernie Royal, Richard Williams, Clark Terry,  
Eddie Armour, Lonnie Hillyer, Rolf Ericson – trumpets

Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, Jimmy Cleveland,  
Willie Dennis, Eddie Bert, Paul Faulise – trombones

Eric Dolphy, Charles McPherson,  
Charlie Mariano, Buddy Collette – alto saxophones

Romeo Penque – oboe Zoot Sims, George Berg – tenor saxophones

Jerome Richardson, Pepper Adams – baritone saxophones

Danny Bank – contrabass clarinet

Jaki Byard, Toshiko Akiyoshi – pianos Les Spann – guitar

Milt Hinton, Charles Mingus – basses Dannie Richmond – drums

Warren Smith – vibes, percussion Grady Tate – percussion

Arranged by Melba Liston, Bob Hammer and Gene Roland

This CD features the complete historic 1962

Town Hall Concert by Charles Mingus,

originally recorded for United Artists Records.

It has been digitally remixed from the original three-track tapes.

Personnel listings for this concert have always been uncertain.

Fortunately, Eddie Bert made a list on the day of the concert and

Mingus made some stage announcements, so we are certain the

above credits are correct.

+ original two-track mix was used

\* previously issued in edited form.

The aka titles are the ones used on the original

United Artists LP release.

\*\* previously unissued

Original recording produced by Alan Douglas and George Wein

Reissue produced by Brian Priestley

Art direction and design by Patrick Roques

Photography by Chuck Stewart

Recorded on October 12, 1962 for United Artists Records

Digitally remixed from the original three-track tapes by Malcolm Addey,

except #1 for which the original two-track mix was used.

CHARLES MINGUS'S concert at New York's Town Hall on October 12, 1962 was quickly classified as a particularly low point in the Mingus mythology, and an abject failure. This view is only partly modified by reading the coverage of the event in *Downbeat* and especially in *Jazz*, edited by Dan Morgenstern. Both of these sources referred to music played but not included on the 1963 LP (UAS 15024) drawn from the concert which won the 1963 *Down Beat International Critics Poll* as album of the year, which was especially frustrating for those listeners who believed that Mingus was not the villain of the piece.

Speculation concerning the quality of the music he assembled for the event, but didn't record successfully, was finally laid to rest when his surviving manuscripts were catalogued in the mid-1980s by the writer and musician (and Ellington authority) Andrew Homzy. They were found to contain a whole two hours of big-band scores which Mingus collected under the title of "Epitaph" Suite, part of which had been performed at Town Hall, and which his widow Sue Mingus then asked composer/musicologist Gunther Schuller to prepare for its final unveiling at Alice Tully Hall on June 3, 1989. As well as bringing to fruition much exciting and thought provoking music that had never been heard publicly, the momentous *Epitaph* concert made it even more intriguing to find out what had actually been taped during the fraught 1962 concert directed by Mingus himself.

As to reasons why the original occasion was so fraught, a short list would include the following facts. (1) Mingus's ambitiousness in persuading the United Artists company to do an album with a 30-piece band, and in taking on the necessary amount of writing (some of the music was from his earlier repertoire, perhaps because, as he later said, he was out of practice at doing written arrangements). (2) Producer Alan Douglas's or his bosses' sudden acceptance of a Town Hall booking five weeks earlier than first planned. (3) United Artists' adoption of a plan to blur the lines between an "open recording session with invited audience" and a straight concert that just happens to be recorded. (4) The inability of the uncredited engineer to tape the last of the three rehearsals, or to provide playback speakers on stage, or even to communicate to the players on the night what had been recorded and what not.

"I would surmise that at least an hour of Mingus's music came off well - excluding the false starts etc.," wrote Ted White in *Jazz*. White was dismayed that the LP of the concert, which sadly helped to underline the reputation of the concert itself, was only 36 minutes long. Now at last, 32 years after the fact, we can see that he was right, even though some takes which he described may - incredibly enough - have not been actually recorded or were erased at the time. In addition, for whatever reasons, four tracks were shortened on the LP and five tracks now released for the first time were not included. But the surviving tapes (which, by the way, were mastered without Mingus's knowledge or participation) show evidence of indecision, for some tracks were prepared for possible use which were not issued. Not the least of the problems of the 1963 release was that the LP masters acquired much distortion not present on the original recordings.

As a result, the present digital remastering sounds far better than anyone dared to hope. And, thanks to the

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restored sound, much of the music springs to life far more vividly than those familiar with the LP would predict. The personnel that Mingus had booked, with last-ditch assistance from Jerome Richardson, was packed with his early contemporaries from the West Coast (such as Buddy Collette, Ernie Royal, Britt Woodman), other top-class sessionmen including colleagues from his time with Hampton and Ellington (Snooky Young, Clark Terry, Quentin Jackson) and an amazing selection of his former and current sidemen - for instance the altoists Charlie Mariano, Charles McPherson and Eric Dolphy!

The music here is presented (with one exception) in its order of performance, and by no means confirms the impression given by the concert's reviewers of an evening going steadily downhill. Certainly, some of the audience, having no intermediary except Mingus to explain the pacing of a typical record session, were not delighted by the false starts and the incomplete performances intended to be edited together later, or by retakes of numbers which sounded satisfactory in the hall but not to the musicians or engineers. It was doubtless to break them in gently (rather than the listeners) that Mingus started the evening with relatively simple material.

Part I of "Freedom," which opens our programming, was actually performed before "Peggy's Blue Skylight." But it stands apart from the rest of the contents for several reasons, one of which is the absence of the original three-track master tape; it is also a piece identified with the fine documentary film *Mingus* (directed by Tom Reichman), which includes a brief 16mm video of the concert and excerpts from this track. The chief factor, however, is the casting of Mingus's own

voice in a leading role, reading a deeply-felt poem he had written many years earlier, at the time (judging by its opening line) of the anti-Communist witch-hunts of such figures as Paul Robeson.

"Clark In The Dark," the first piece to be taped with the engineer still getting a balance, has Terry building a wonderfully expressive solo over a backing figure derived from "Freedom" and has a slightly longer intro (with fluctuating recording levels) than on the LP. It was intended by Mingus to be edited in as part of "Freedom," probably at the fade before the return of the narration. But, lacking a precise instruction as to where, we have left you to try this at home. The next piece, "Osmotin'," is a Monkish 32-bar tune in Mingus's current small-group repertoire featuring Charles McPherson and probably Toshiko Akiyoshi, and ends in mid-air as if intending a further take which never happened.

At this point Mingus decided to perform the first section of "Epitaph," describing it as "Main Score Part 1" since this was written on the band's music. In a subsequent issue of *Jazz*, he pointed out that "The music was all one suite...but we had different copyists, so for their purposes I marked off the score in sections, Parts 1, 2 and 3." This monumental movement begins with a big-band recreation of his famous "Pithecanthropus Erectus" and later has high-register trumpets quoting Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me" and "Carnegie Blues." It also has a brilliant solo by Dolphy, including dialoguing with Mingus's bass, and plunger-mute work from Terry and trombonist Woodman (the only soloist here who was able to reprise his contribution at Schuller's 1989 concert).

"Peggy's Blue Skylight," a languorous slow-medium melody that Mingus debuted in the film *All Night Long*, was arranged and directed for this concert by another West Coast colleague, Melba Liston (despite calling on several co-writers, Mingus had not slept the two nights previous to the concert in an attempt to complete his music). Liston's relatively conventional style suits the material, and the solos by Richardson and McPherson. This is followed by "Epitaph Part II" which, strangely, bears little resemblance to "Main Score Part 2" as restored by Schuller but features Ernie Royal and a final collective improvisation. The performance is some 80 seconds longer than the previously released version, and is now seen to begin with the same oboe-led theme heard later in the movement.

As the last item before the intermission, "My Search" is one of Mingus's bebop-plus transformations of a standard song, Vernon Duke's "I Can't Get Started." The involved new written line played by McPherson and Lonnie Hillyer turns into a brief McPherson solo before Mingus's virtuoso bass gets its main feature of the evening. After he is briefly submerged by the brass, the piano solo (a retake which was edited in on the original LP, according to Mingus's instructions) is played by Toshiko Akiyoshi followed by a passionate contribution from her then husband, Charlie Mariano.

After the intermission and following a short set fronted by alto saxophonist Fess Williams, the 1920s and 30s band leader who was one of his uncles, Mingus continued with two further ballads. The simple but heartfelt "Portrait" was written in the late 40s, and this version featuring McPherson (with a piano interlude by Jaki Byard)

is partly based on the string arrangement Mingus recorded with Thad Jones in 1954.

On the other hand "Duke's Choice" - which, like "Portrait," does not form part of the rediscovered score used by Gunther Schuller - is a more complex line from Mingus's mature period of the late 1950s. This arrangement for a smaller group is by Bob Hammer, and was re-made (as "IX Love") for Impulse Records the following year, as indeed was "Freedom." The melody and alto solo are played by Buddy Collette with a closing cadenza believed to be by Richard Williams. On the original LP, this performance was faded just after a timing error by the saxes, whereas here the retake of the rest of the piece has been edited in according to instructions on the tape box.

The lyrical medium-tempo tune "Please Don't Come Back From The Moon," also in Mingus's sextet repertoire of the period, features Williams, first in mute then open. He is followed by pianist Byard, Zoot Sims (yet another friend from the West Coast days) and finally Mariano. Then, according to Ted White, "while in the middle of [the] piece, Mingus received a signal and stopped the music."

And that was nearly that. It was approaching midnight. Mingus apologized to the audience, as he had done several times earlier, and began to leave the stage to desultory applause. "But while a few musicians were already packing their instruments," said White, "others were not content to let the show die so easily. Clark Terry...now began sounding out a familiar riff, and within seconds "In A Mellotone" had been picked up by most of the others in the brass section." The impromptu version, less well recorded since the players stood informally at the front of the stage, developed into a solo by Richardson, followed by Pepper Adams, Terry and Woodman. But, as Woodman got under way, the riffs were taken over by two stagehands and, "with the audience rising to boo, the two men began to pull the curtains closed."

This drama has been public knowledge since the event although, by letting the tape run on a further 35 seconds, we can now hear Dolphy play a whole chorus of "52nd Street Theme" during the final enthusiastic applause. But the real discovery is that, apparently after clearing the hall, the band stayed behind and recorded a further take of "Epitaph Part I." Better performed, more relaxed, and containing a new Dolphy solo, this version runs on longer than the first issued version and comes to a satisfactory conclusion featuring Mariano. Why it was not chosen for release is a mystery, and the fact that it ends without applause doesn't mean this isn't one of the most impressive performances of the entire concert.

Obviously, this event at Town Hall was misconceived in a number of ways - by the producer expecting to tape even an LP's worth of new music in under three hours and in front of an audience; by the engineer hoping to capture the occasion despite a minimum of liaison with the musicians; and very possibly, by Mingus in continuing to provide further material even while rehearsals were under way. But this expanded reissue of what was recorded certainly gives a more rounded and better reproduced picture of the evening's activities, and shows that it was by no means the musical failure which has long been imagined.

-Brian Priestley

Author, *Mingus: A Critical Biography* (Da Capo Publications)

THE FINEST JAZZ SINCE 1939



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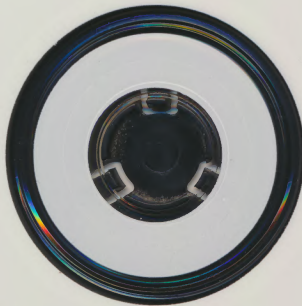
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**THE COMPLETE**  
**TOWN HALL**  
**CONCERT**

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